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‘As if they had physically visited the holy places’ Two Sixteenth-century Manuscripts Guide a Mental Journey through Jerusalem (Radboud University Library, Mss 205 and 233)

Hanneke van Asperen

In the special collections of Radboud University Library are two sixteenth-century manuscripts that contain internal, or mental, pilgrimages through the city of Jerusalem. The texts allow the reader to visit the biblical sites in Jerusalem without leaving the confines of the home. One element sets them apart from the popular devotion known as the Stations of the Cross: both texts mention the exact distances between the sites. This makes it theoretically possible for the readers to duplicate the journey of Christ to Mount Calvary while trying to imagine his suffering. The mental pilgrims could earn remissions of temporal punishment ‘as if they had physically visited the holy places’.¹

Jerusalem was vividly present in collective thought at the time the texts were written and used, although access to some of the Christian sites of worship had become difficult because the city was under Muslim control. Some churches had fallen into disrepair or were (partly) destroyed. The incalculable significance of the far-away city that had become less and less accessible gave rise to a large body of literature dedicated to pilgrimages to the Holy Land. One of the genres was the religious exercise of mental pilgrimage. The spiritual journey through the city of Jerusalem has been the subject of well-wrought research.² However, a few elements in the pilgrimage exercises merit further attention. First, the exercises were not limited to sites in Jerusalem, but focused on relics in Rome as well. Apparently, the mental pilgrimage gave the devotee freedom to ‘move’ beyond geographical and temporal boundaries. Additionally, the exercises combine traditional meditations on the Life and Passion of Christ

1 Ms 233, fol. 1r: ‘die moghen verdienen al die oflaten des heijlighe stats iherusalem alleleens of sij alle die heijlighe plaetsen lichamelick visitierden’.

2 I would like to thank Kathryn Rudy, because this article relies for a major part on her extensive work on the subject. She made several valuable suggestions for improvement after reading it pre-publication.

with (elements of) popular fifteenth-century devotions such as the Sorrows of the Virgin and the rosary. Finally, measurements linked to Christ's road to Calvary, such as the distances between the different stations, gave the pilgrim the possibility of replicating the physical journey, but they also turn the book into a veritable relic of the Passion.

Augustinian Canonesses and Franciscans

Mental pilgrimage has a long tradition. It was popularized during the late fourteenth and fifteenth centuries by different religious orders, not least by the protagonists of the *Devotio Moderna* or Modern-Day Devout, a spiritual reform movement under the guidance of the theologian and preacher Geert Grote (1340–84).³ Geert Grote and the Modern-Day Devout focused on the necessity for every individual to imitate Christ. Devotional literature with a strong focus on the Passion would help to accomplish their goal.⁴ Pilgrimage on the other hand, including the journey to the Holy Land, was regarded with suspicion since it more often led to physical corruption than mental salvation.⁵ Mental pilgrimage provided the devout with a way to imitate Christ and profit from the advantages of pilgrimage, while avoiding the dangers and temptations that were inextricably bound up with a physical journey. Furthermore, mental pilgrimage was a welcome alternative for those people who could not leave their homes, for example those who had taken the vow of *clausura*. Religious women, especially, seem to have had a preference for pilgrimage exercises.⁶

Two manuscripts in Radboud University Library illustrate, however, that mental pilgrimage was an exercise that did not limit itself to circles of the Modern-Day Devout but was picked up and elaborated upon in different religious orders.⁷ The first (Ms 205; Fig. 8.1) was compiled and used at the convent

3 Rudy 2011, pp. 23–30 and 119–20; Bethlehem 1992, p. 326. The exercise of mental pilgrimage harks back to the twelfth century and maybe even farther back, e.g. Connolly 2005, pp. 310–13; Miedema 2003, p. 404; Connolly 1999, pp. 598–622; Bethlehem 1992, pp. 326–29; Marrow 1979, pp. 1–27; Van Hacketborn 1958, pp. 63–64.

4 Kock 1999 and Wierda 1996, pp. 104–11.

5 Koldewey 2000, p. 230 and Bethlehem 1992, pp. 321–325; Thomas à Kempis wrote: 'also werden si oec selden heylich die veel pelgrymaedze gaen'. Kempis and Bruyn 1954, p. 82 (book 1, ch. 23). For criticism on physical pilgrimage by others than the Modern-Day Devout, e.g. by Felix Fabri, see: Beebe 2008, pp. 43–44 and Beebe 2006, pp. 105–06.

6 Rudy 2011, pp. 255–56.

7 Rudy 2011, pp. 23–35.

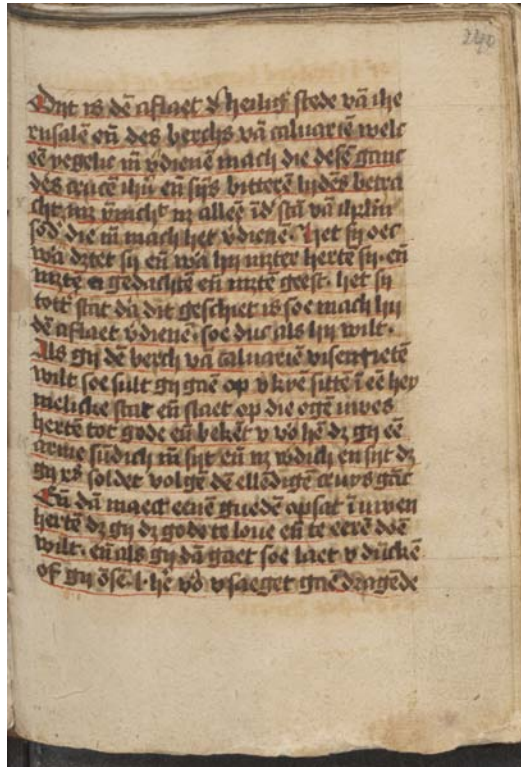


FIGURE 8.1 *First page of The Indulgence of the Holy Sites of Jerusalem, possibly written in Maaseik, ca. 1500, parchment.*
 NIJMEGEN: RADBOUD UNIVERSITY
 LIBRARY, MS 205, FOL. 240R.

of St Agnes in Maaseik, originally a community of the Sisters of the Common Life.⁸ It moved to the grounds 'op de Weide' in 1405 where the sisters took up the Rule of Saint Augustine in 1415–16. In 1455, the convent of Mariaweide became the seat of the newly founded Chapter of Venlo in line with the wish for a lifestyle after the example of the Congregation of Windesheim, the monastic branch of the Modern-Day Devout.⁹ The mental pilgrimage is in line with

8 On Ms 205 see: Rudy 2011, esp. pp. 130–46; Rudy 2000[a], pp. 235–36, no. 9; Huisman 1997, pp. 148–80; Stooker and Verbey 1997, p. 408; Moderne Devotie 1984, pp. 307–08, no. 115; Deschamps 1967; Wijngaards 1957, pp. 422–26; Feugen 1938, pp. 319–29.

9 The book contains *Hundert Betrachtungen und Bekehrungen* in Dutch from Henricus Suso (fols 9–27v). Suso was one of the favorite authors of the Modern-Day Devout. Van Aelst 2011, pp. 93–134; Van Aelst 2005; Van Aelst 2000, pp. 86–88; Bethlehem 1992, p. 327.

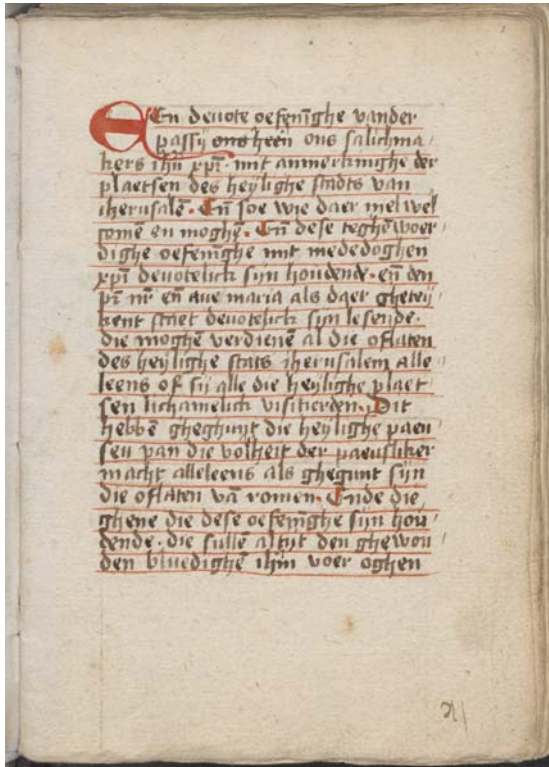


FIGURE 8.2 *First page of A Devout Exercise of the Passion of Our Saviour in a prayer book for Passion devotion, written for a Franciscan audience, first half of the sixteenth century, parchment. NIJMEGEN: RADBOUD UNIVERSITY LIBRARY, MS 233, FOL. 1R.*

those practices of the Modern-Day Devouts that the sisters of Mariaweide so deeply admired. The pilgrimage exercise entitled *The Indulgence of the Holy Sites of Jerusalem* ('Den Aflaet der Heilighe Steden van Jherusalem') had a considerable popularity among the sisters of Maaseik; they wrote out several copies that have been carefully investigated and described in much detail, most recently by Kathryn Rudy.¹⁰ The other book of mental pilgrimage in Radboud University Library (Ms 233) stems from a Franciscan context (Fig. 8.2).¹¹ The

¹⁰ Rudy 2011 and Rudy 2000[a].

¹¹ Literature on Ms 233: Huisman 1997, pp. 209–21. See: Rudy 2000[b], p. 466, for a manuscript with a guide for mental pilgrimage that was probably for a Franciscan monk.

'aubergine style' pen work points to the province of South Holland.¹² The texts must have been written in 1503 at the earliest because Pope Julius II (1503–13) is mentioned twice (fols 42r and 43r). The book was probably produced in the first half of the sixteenth century and this is corroborated by the watermarks which have been dated between 1477 and 1553.

From Pilgrimage to Passion Devotion

There is an impressive body of scholarship that has already addressed mental, or virtual, pilgrimage.¹³ The desire for mental exercises arose from the idea that travelling to a sacred site in itself did not constitute a proper pilgrimage. The spiritual effort of pilgrimage was considered more important than the physical strain. With the words of the Franciscan Friar Matfre Hermengaud in his *Breviari d'Amor*, which he started to write in 1288: 'Without true love of God the attempts to reach the sanctuaries of St Menas or the Holy Virgin, of St James or of Rome are futile, because the pilgrim will not find God if God is not in himself'.¹⁴ The ultimate goal of Ermengaud's encyclopaedic work is to teach the laity about natural, divinely sanctioned love. He continuously stresses that religious acts such as pilgrimage are meaningless without piety.

From the growing importance attached to spiritual exertion it was a small step to eliminate the physical aspect from pilgrimage altogether and focus entirely on the spiritual elements, thus creating a pilgrimage of the mind.¹⁵ The exercise elaborates on the concept of life as a *peregrinatio* – in the classical sense of living or travelling abroad – which was developed by Augustine in the fifth century.¹⁶ From this, pilgrimage came to be regarded as a metaphor of life: a return of the soul to his fatherland which is the city of God, i.e. the Heavenly

¹² Kriezels 1992, pp. 68–83.

¹³ On mental pilgrimage, see for example: Rudy 2011; Ehrenscheidtner 2009, pp. 45–73; Beebe 2008, pp. 39–70; Rudy 2006, pp. 405–19; Hull 2005, pp. 29–50; Miedema 2003, pp. 398–462; Koldewey 2000, pp. 222–52; Rudy 2000[a], pp. 211–54; Rudy 2000[b], pp. 494–515; Connolly 1999, pp. 598–622; Miedema 1998, pp. 73–92; Cahn 1992, pp. 89–98; Bethlehem 1992, pp. 321–34; Wasser 1991, pp. 29–33; Meertens 1931, pp. 96–108; Kneller 1908, pp. 7–18; Gonnet 1884. This is just a selection of authors. For an extensive bibliography, see: Rudy 2011.

¹⁴ Ermengaud 1998, p. 286. On the *Breviari d'Amor*, see: Bolduc 2006.

¹⁵ Ms 205, fol. 240r: 'Dijt is den aflaet der heiliger stede van iherusalem ende des berchs van caluarien welc een yegelic mens verdienen mach die desen ganc des crucen ihesu ende sijns bitteren lijdens betracht met ynichheit'.

¹⁶ Claussen 1991, p. 33.

Jerusalem. In the words of the Delft-born priest Christiaan van Adrichem who wrote several works on the Holy Land, Jerusalem could be regarded as 'a figure of every faithfull mans soule'.¹⁷ Piously travelling through Jerusalem, the mental pilgrims could model their lives after Christ's example. This way, Jerusalem was imprinted in their hearts.

To transform a Jerusalem pilgrimage account into an exercise of devotion to the Passion, the sequence of the sites in the mental exercise could (and should) be shifted. Most Holy Land pilgrims visited Bethlehem and Nazareth after they had seen the sites in Jerusalem.¹⁸ In *A Devout Exercise of the Passion of Our Saviour*, the topographical sequence of the sites has been abandoned in favour of the chronology of the events. After the stations of Nazareth where the Virgin was visited by Gabriel, and Bethlehem where Christ was born, circumcized and visited by the Three Magi, the mental pilgrim continues with the sites from the Passion ending with the station of Pentecost. *A Devout Exercise* seems the next logical step in the modification of the Jerusalem pilgrimage account into a spiritual exercise.¹⁹ The new sequence corresponds with traditional meditations on the Life and Passion of Christ, such as St Aelred of Rievaulx describes in a letter from 1160.²⁰

In making up an exercise of Passion devotion locations could be skipped entirely. Stations were carefully chosen, depending on the events to be commemorated. The misreading or misunderstanding of the words in a source text could even lead to the invention of a new station. The arch of Ecce Homo is called *swych boeg* in many mental pilgrimage texts. Occasionally, the last word *boog* or *boeg* (arch) is changed into *boom* or *boem*.²¹ In *A Devout Exercise*, this station is transformed into the station of the *vighe boem* (fig tree).²² The text

17 Van Adrichem 1495, p. 1. Also: Wasser 1991, p. 62; Waaijman 2000, p. 39–41.

18 As for example Anselm Adornes (1470–71), Felix Fabri (1483) and Bernhard von Breydenbach (1483–84). Adornes 1978, pp. 285–315; Fabri [1964], pp. 52–56; Davies 1968.

19 It is generally assumed, and with good reason, that the mental pilgrimages were based on actual pilgrimage accounts. See: Rudy 2011, pp. 255–56; Beebe 2008, pp. 39–70; Rudy 2000[b], pp. 514–15; Miedema 1998, p. 92; Wasser 1991, pp. 29–32. After the exercises of mental pilgrimage were firmly established they probably started to influence actual pilgrimage accounts. This may have been what happened in *A brieft description of Hierusalem*. See: Van Adrichem 1595, pp. 57–59.

20 Aelred of Rievaulx 1971; Aelred of Rievaulx 1957, pp. 32–49.

21 For example Van Haver 1963, p. 49 (on Heer Bethléem). Both 'swich boege' and 'swych boem' are used in Ms 205 (fols 244r and 245r).

22 Ms 233, fol. 15v: 'Ende als ghij o lieue heer ihesu xpe mitten cruce weder waert op gherecht soe sijt ghij in grote banicheit [sic] voert ghegaen ende sijt alsoe bijder stede des vijghe-boems ghecomen'.

on this station is very short; no event is associated with this location, whereas the other stations are described in great detail and are always coupled with specific events and emotions. No known tradition of the *via crucis* involves a fig tree. Most likely, this fig tree or *vyghe boom* is a corruption of the word for the station of the spandrel arch. Significantly, the scribe added the correct number of ells between the station of the fall and the invented site of the fig tree without any corrections, making it likely that he or she had a corrupt model that was copied faithfully.²³

Another step in the transformation was the amalgamation of different devotional exercises. The Maaseik exercise was probably developed from a text that focused on the ascent of Mount Calvary. The source text does not contain the last three stations where the focus shifts from Christ to the Virgin: her swoon at the base of the cross, the mourning over the dead Christ and the entombment.²⁴ These final three stations were possibly added later. Additional, although indecisive, arguments for this hypothesis are provided by the rubric of the source text: 'This is the indulgence of the holy site of Calvary' instead of 'This is the indulgence of the holy sites of Jerusalem and of Mount Calvary' as in the later copies. Further on the rubric reads 'If you then start the mountain...' which is not repeated in later versions.²⁵

Regardless of their origin, the last three stations focusing on the suffering of the Virgin clearly indicate the influence of the popular devotion of the Sorrows of the Virgin. The Sorrows were a vehicle for Passion devotion which made them complementary to mental pilgrimages.²⁶ The Maaseik pilgrimage makes it possible for the reader to follow Christ's example using the Virgin as a model for emotional response. Consequently, Christ's mother is elevated to a status where she became worthy of imitation herself.

The rosary was another popular tool for Passion devotion in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. In the mental pilgrimage called *A Devout Exercise of the Passion of Our Saviour* ('Een Devote Oefeninghe vander Passij Ons Salichmakers') in the Observant book, every meditation is followed by common prayers, namely the *Pater Noster* and the *Ave Maria*. This coupling of meditations and prayers is reminiscent of the increasingly popular rosary devotion.²⁷

23 Ms 233, fol. 16r: 'Van die stede des vals tot die stede des vigheboems, dat sijn xxxiiij ellen'.

24 Kathryn Rudy thinks it is possible that the last stations are missing from the source text which she identifies as a manuscript in Brussels (Royal Library of Belgium, MS IV 428), but also suggests that the text ended with the crucifixion. Rudy 2000[a], p. 222.

25 Brussels, Royal Library of Belgium, Ms IV 428, fol. 300v. See: Rudy 2011, pp. 371–72.

26 Schuler 1992, pp. 5–28.

27 On the rosary devotion: As-Vijvers 2007, pp. 41–79; Rosenkranz 2003; Miller 2002; Winston-Allen 1997; Wilkins 1969.

The rosary sprouted from different devotions such as the repetitive citation of common prayers and the Psalter which was originally a recitation of the 150 Psalms.²⁸ Although different forms of the rosary circulated during the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, there are some recurring elements: chronologically-ordered meditations on the Life of Christ and his mother in combination with repetitive citations of *Aves* and *Pater Nosters*; features that characterize the pilgrimage exercise in the Observant manuscript.

Jerusalem and Rome

Rome was the usual destination for mental travellers in addition to Jerusalem. Jerusalem and Rome were obvious choices for different reasons. The two cities could claim seniority; they were the oldest pilgrimage sites of Christianity, one in the East, the other in the West. Secondly, Jerusalem and Rome had more than one site to visit, offering the mental pilgrim the possibility of a sequential exercise, whether chronological or not. Thirdly, the areas in and around Jerusalem and Rome offered mnemotechnical advantages that helped memorize and structure the corresponding contemplations.²⁹ In a way, all Christians were familiar with Jerusalem and Rome because the cities formed an essential part of their discourse. Fourthly, the pilgrimage attractions in Jerusalem and Rome concentrated on the events described in the New Testament, especially Christ's Passion.³⁰ The holy places in Jerusalem were physically and conceptually tied up with the incidents from the Life of Christ, and Rome had numerous relics of the Passion. The sites in Jerusalem that were saturated with Christ's blood, sweat and tears during the Passion were important – if not the most important – relics of Christ on earth.³¹ Rome and Jerusalem were complementary in many respects. Holy Land pilgrims visited Bethlehem to see where Christ was

28 As-Vijvers 2007, pp. 46–47.

29 Ousterhout 2009 and Carruthers 1998, p. 269. Kathryn Rudy dedicated a section in her book on virtual pilgrimage to 'memory houses of the Passion' as aids to remember intricate narratives. Rudy 2011, pp. 150–70 and also Carruthers 2008, p. 135. Obviously, streets and charts had the same potential for 'storing' memories as houses.

30 Miedema 1998, pp. 84–85.

31 When describing Mount Calvary, one of the pilgrimage texts actually states that the mountain is 'saturated with the precious blood of Jesus and drenched with the tears of sweet maid Mary'. (Ms 205, fol. 251v). On the relic-like importance of earth and stones, see: Rudy 2011, pp. 107–118 and Beebe 2006, pp. 106–07. Lucy Donkin is currently completing a monograph on medieval attitudes to holy ground which might shed interesting light on earthen relics.

born, but they could visit his manger in Santa Maria Maggiore in Rome. The house of the Last Supper was located in Jerusalem; the table where Christ sat with his disciples was in St John Lateran. The Holy Sepulchre and Mount Calvary were the main attractions of Jerusalem; the nails of the cross and the *titulus* were kept in Santa Croce in Rome in a chapel that was suggestively and symbolically called *Gerusalemme*.³²

Mental pilgrimage through the city of Rome served the same purpose as an imagined stay in Jerusalem. The mental pilgrim could visit the Seven Churches of Rome 'as if one were in the Holy Land'.³³ Not surprisingly, pilgrimages through Rome and Jerusalem sometimes appear in the same manuscripts.³⁴ The two traditions could even be intertwined. In the two Nijmegen booklets, the relics of Rome are woven into the fabric of a Jerusalem pilgrimage. When the pilgrim reaches the site where Christ fell on the stairs while carrying the Cross, the text mentions that the *scala santa* is in St John Lateran in Rome.³⁵ When Christ reaches Veronica's house near Jerusalem's judicial gate and leaves his imprint on the cloth that Veronica gave him to dry his face, there is mention of the relic of the veil which is kept in St Peter's in Rome.³⁶ The incorporation of the Roman churches in the pilgrimage text indicates the importance attributed to these relics. The veil and the *scala santa* had become so important and inextricably bound up with their respective churches that both these objects *and* their sanctuary had to be incorporated in a description of Christ's way to

32 On Roman relics of the Passion, see: Miedema 2003, *passim*; Miedema 2001, pp. 833–38 and Birch 1998, *passim*. On Santa Croce in Rome, see: De Blaauw 2012, pp. 27–39. See Rudy 2011, pp. 175–83 and 401–02, for a manuscript with a mental pilgrimage listing the Passion relics in Rome. See also Sible de Blaauw in this volume.

33 Cited from a rubric in a manuscript with a compilation of mental pilgrimages, written in Briggittine convent for a female audience, texts in Latin and Dutch, late fifteenth century, kept in The British Library, Ms 31001, fols 68v–69r: 'als of men waer inder stat van Roemen' as transcribed by Rudy 2011, p. 401. Compare to Radboud University Library, Ms 233, fol. 1r. On Rome as an alternative to Jerusalem, see: Rudy 2011, p. 197.

34 Bethlehem 1992, pp. 327–29. See: Rudy 2011, pp. 235–238; Rudy 2000[b], p. 513, and Miedema 1998, pp. 87–88, for the example of the abbess of a convent in Villingen (Germany) who had the stations of Rome and Jerusalem carved on marble slabs allowing the nuns to walk from one place to another.

35 Ms 233, fol. 15v: 'Ist saeck dat ijemant dese trappen op cruijpt op sijn bloete knijen ende op elcke trappe deutelick spreeket een pr nr ende een aue maria. Dese trap heeft xxvij graden ende is noch huijden te daghe tot sinte ians te lateranen te romen in sijn kercke'.

36 Ms 233, fol. 18r: 'Ende doe sijt ghij o lieue heer toe ghegaen ende hebt v ghebenedijde aensicht volcomelick in den doeck ghedruckt ende hebse veronica weder om in een teijken des liefs voer een testament ghegheuen ende noch ter tijt soe wort dat te romen in sinte peters kerck bewaert voer heijlichdom'.

Calvary. Although the devotee places himself in Christ's footsteps and transposes himself to the biblical times when the relics were supposedly still in Jerusalem, nevertheless it is considered important to mention their current presence in Rome. The sanctuaries of Rome derived their significance from the presence of these important Passion relics so that, in turn, the churches become a part of biblical Jerusalem. Although the text deals with events and objects supposedly from biblical times, not with the contemporary cities, temporal boundaries dissolve and the churches of Rome are superimposed upon the map of Jerusalem.

Despite the similarities between Rome and Jerusalem, logical but significant differences in the descriptions of two cities characterize the mental journeys. Jerusalem's churches are not incorporated in the pilgrimage text. Even the Church of the Holy Sepulchre which was the climax of every pilgrim's visit to Jerusalem is not mentioned. This does not mean that the site was of less importance to the mental pilgrim. On the contrary, its significance is amply expressed in the plenary indulgence that both the physical and the mental pilgrim could gain.³⁷ These plenary indulgences were reserved for a few sites of major importance. In contrast to the indulgences to be gained from visiting Rome, the Jerusalem indulgences are connected with the sites and the events rather than the sanctuary and its objects.

Churches are not mentioned but some of Jerusalem's monuments are, namely the elevated place where Pilate sat when he judged Christ (called *lithostrotos*), and the 'high' spandrel arch (or *swych boeg*) which was believed to have been the location of Pilate's *ecce homo* speech.³⁸ According to the text, Constantine's mother, Helena, had two stones of marble installed that were originally situated in front of Pilate's palace. Christ had stood on one of them during Pilate's speech, Pilate on the other. These elements were probably integrated in the pilgrimage because they were supposedly present at the time the crucifixion took place. They are extant relics of the Passion, unlike the churches that were built afterwards to commemorate an event.

37 Sites with plenary indulgences are marked with a cross; these are the stations of the receiving of the Cross (3), Ecce Homo (4), where Christ meets the Virgin (5), Mount Calvary (9), the Lamentation (11) and the Entombment (12 and last). Besides indicating plenary indulgences, the crosses mark the sites of special importance on the road to Calvary since plenary indulgences are always coupled with sites of salvific significance.

38 Ms 205, fol. 241r: 'dat richt huys dat stont op enen wyden plaen genoemt licostratos' and Ms 205, fol. 245r: 'hoegen swych boom'. On the *lithostrotos*, see: Marrow 1979, pp. 127–28. On the problems with the identification of Pilate's house and the gate through the centuries, see: Pringle 2010, pp. 89–91 and 93–97.

The events themselves could be regarded as relics. Several forms of late-medieval piety focused on the Passion through its excerpts; these could be narrative scenes, Christ's body and the instruments of the Passion or his wounds. David Areford has convincingly argued that this kind of devotion was closely linked with the veneration of relics.³⁹ Because of the fragmentation of the Passion the events gained relic-like importance. A fifteenth-century print visualizes the relic-like status of the Sorrows of the Virgin. Two male figures, a monk and a nobleman, kneel in adoration of the scenes of the Sorrows (Fig. 8.3).⁴⁰ Behind the monk and the nobleman stand a man and a woman, apparently of simple birth. The scenes of the Sorrows are stored in a reliquary-shaped frame reminiscent of a monstrance containing hosts which were often venerated as if they were relics and thought to instigate miracles. Related prints explicitly refer to the pilgrimage site of Delft (Holland) where 'many miracles happened after the invocation of the Passion of Christ and Sorrows of the Virgin'.⁴¹ The Delft cult of Our Lady of Seven Sorrows can be traced back to a document of 1506, but might be somewhat older.⁴² Because of the way the Delft cult is described, and the way it is visualized in the pilgrimage prints, it seems that the events coupled with the Sorrows of the Virgin were venerated in a way that was analogous to the veneration of the Delft statue of Our Lady of Sorrows, as miracle-working images.

When contemplating the seven Sorrows of the Virgin, the devotee 'also has to contemplate in the Passion of Our Lord', wrote Father Dierick Adamszoon who actively propagated the cult of Our Lady of Sorrows in the city of Delft.⁴³ Notably, the monk to the side of the print is involved in repetitive prayer using a string of prayer beads. The most common repetitive prayer exercise was the rosary which, as mentioned earlier, was often used to contemplate the Passion. Again, the rosary, the Sorrows of the Virgin and the Passion are inextricably connected.

39 Areford 1998, pp. 214–15. Holy Land pilgrims for all strata occupied themselves with the veneration and the collecting of memorabilia of the Passion. Beebe 2006, pp. 106–07.

40 Hollstein [1956], vol. XIII, p. 158, no. 127. On the Sorrows of the Virgin and their role in the devotion to Christ's Passion, see: Schuler 1992, esp. pp. 7–11.

41 For a similar print with the inscription 'Eert Ihs passie ende die ween van marien [Doe]r welck te delf [sic: Delft] veel miraculen gheschien'. Rudy 2011, Fig. 89. Other Delft pilgrimage prints are in the collection of the Rijksmuseum Amsterdam (inv. nos RP-OB-2123, RP-OB-2124 and RP-P-1912–385). Verhoeven 1992, p. 355.

42 Verhoeven 1992, pp. 228–46.

43 Verhoeven 1992, p. 228.



FIGURE 8.3 *Master S, the Sorrows of the Virgin in a roundel-reliquary, ca. 1500-1525, engraving, 145 × 97 mm. LONDON: BRITISH MUSEUM, PRINTS & DRAWINGS, REG. 1847,1009.21. © THE TRUSTEES OF THE BRITISH MUSEUM.*

Measuring the Passion

The pilgrimage exercises hold an apparent paradox. The texts contain many adjectives and adverbs like *sunderlinge groete pijn* ('exceptionally large pain'), *ontellicx lasters* ('uncountable slanders'), *grondeloese bermherticheit* ('unfathomable mercy').⁴⁴ The message is clear: the sufferings of Christ and his mother and the pity they express are immeasurable and indescribable. On the other hand, the text is filled with quantities and numbers: the exact number of steps

44 Ms 205, fols 240v, 245v and 250r.

or ells between different sites, the sizes of the wounds, the number of steps on every stair and the number of people present.

The measurements are given in order to lend credibility to the descriptions. Furthermore, the desire for the measurable and countable seems to counter-balance the growing emphasis on extreme emotion. When describing the emotions of the Virgin at the time of the crucifixion, the text of *A Devout Exercise* reads: 'And no one can imagine how great her sorrow and pain has been'.⁴⁵ It is hard to imagine the unimaginable; the measurements seem to meet the growing desire to follow in Christ's footsteps although the sufferings of Christ and the Virgin are inconceivable. *A Devout Exercise* is a chronometric relic to boot. The different stages of the mental journey are linked to the days of the week. The rubric states that the devotee can perform the mental pilgrimage in one day, but it is also possible to visit specific sites on specific weekdays. The days are not random; the station of Mount Calvary is visited on a Friday, the day that Christ was crucified. The Resurrection takes place on a Sunday. The entire pilgrimage is completed in a week.⁴⁶ Only when the mind has become one with Christ does it no longer need precise measurements to help it imitate Christ.⁴⁷

One consequence of this desire for the measurable was the metric relic.⁴⁸ Because the English noblewoman Richeldis was told the exact measurements of the house of Nazareth she could have the building replicated in Walsingham; it would attract pilgrims from all over the United Kingdom and the Continent.⁴⁹ Many Jerusalem Chapels were built according to the measurements of the prototype in the Holy Sepulchre.⁵⁰ Even though they hark back to one and the same model, these chapels are very different in appearance and some-

45 Ms 233, fols 20v-21r: 'Ende nijemant en mach daer wt dencken hoe groet dat haer smart ende pijn ende droeffenis is gheweest'.

46 As Rudy has noted, the division of a text into segments to be completed over the course of a week was quite common for devotional texts. Rudy 2011, p. 199 n. 42. For examples of meditations coupled with the days of the week, see also Van Dijk 2000, pp. 52–53 and Kock 1999, pp. 198–201. For a mental pilgrimage coupled with the days of the year, see: Wasser 1991, p. 30.

47 Compare the contemplations of Heinrich Suso, in: Van Aelst 2000, p. 98 and Bethlehem 1992, p. 327.

48 Rudy 2011, pp. 97–107; Ousterhout 2009, pp. 153–268; Areford 1998, pp. 209–38; Pieper 1995, pp. 38–43; Jacobi 1929, p. 187.

49 Spencer 1998, pp. 135–47.

50 Bram de Klerck in this volume; Kroesen 2000; Pieper 1995; Adornes en Jeruzalem 1983, pp. 19–21 and 70–73.

times do not even look like their prototype; their meaning is inherent in their dimensions.

The measurements that were somehow connected to Christ and his Passion could be used to create metric relics. Pilgrims cut off cords that had the exact height of the cross or the length of the Sepulchre, even the sizes of the wounds or the nails that were used during the crucifixion. Sometimes the cords became relics by touching holy relics or sites, but just the association would suffice. Replicas could possess miraculous powers in the same way as other relics. Different devotional manuscripts contain the exact measurements of Christ's body or of the cross.⁵¹ Both *The Indulgence* and *A Devout Exercise* mention in detail the deep wound on Christ's shoulder that was inflicted by carrying of the cross.⁵² The conversation between Saint Bernard and Christ on the excruciating pains of his shoulder wound 'which was three fingers deep' is demonstrable in texts from the early sixteenth century.⁵³ Another manuscript in Radboud University Library (Ms 85) contains a replica of the shoulder wound on a piece of parchment (Fig. 8.4).⁵⁴ The figure of the wound was 'cut out of an iron plaque with an instrument', according to the cryptic text that is written on the same parchment leaf. The text suggests that the image was an exact replica of a metric relic, thus twice removed from the actual wound. A person could obtain an indulgence simply by looking at the image and saying a prayer. Because measurements conveyed meaning, even power, the picture became a metric relic itself. The image was glued to the first page of the manuscript so that the owners could see it every time they opened the book. One of the subsequent proprietors of the book, Geertgen Jans van Woercken, wrote her name above the image, possibly in order to give some direction to the miraculous powers that could work through the image.⁵⁵

51 Neff 2002, pp. 58–61.

52 Ms 205, fol. 249r: 'O lieue here ic danc dij oec der groter pijnen welc du haddes van der dieper wonden die op dijn heilige gebnendide scholder stont die drie vinger diepe was weelc dij meer wee dede dadie ander wonden'; Ms 233, fols 16v-17r: 'ende ghij sijt opter aerden gheuallen ende dat sware hout des heijlighe cruijs viel op v rechter scouder ende heeft daer inghedrukt een wont van drie vinghere diep ghelijkerwijs als men leest dattet sinte bernerdus is gheopenbaert'.

53 Rudy 2011, pp. 105–06; Meertens 1931, pp. 24–26

54 Ms 85, fol. 1r: 'Dit is die manier van die grootheijt des wonde, die onse lieue heere, in sijn gebenedijde schouder hadde, daer hij sijn cruijs op moste draegen. Dat, welcke is wt een ijseren plaet gesteecken mit een instrument, daer dit wt gemeeten is. Soe wiese aensiet mit deuotie, ende leest een Pater noster, die sal vertroost worden, in wat lijden dat hij is'.

55 Ms 85, fol. 1r, above the image: 'Dit boeck hoort toe Geertgen Jans van Woercken'.

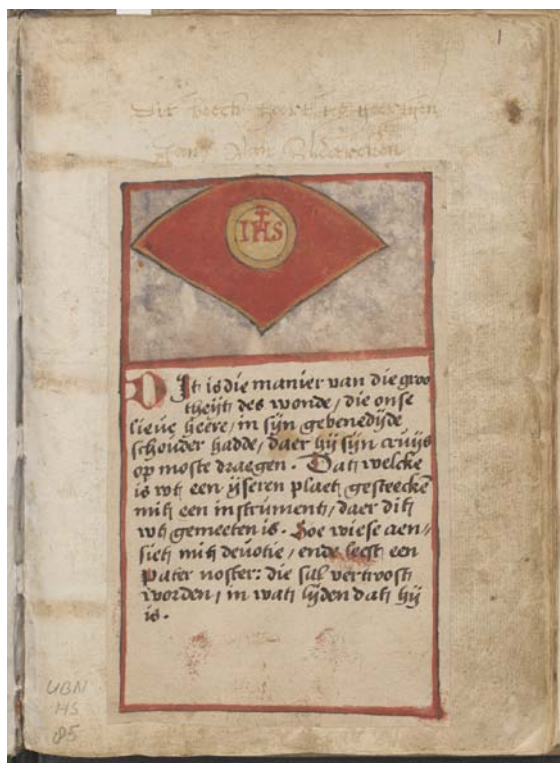


FIGURE 8.4 *Anonymous, glued-in miniature of Christ's shoulder wound with text, ca. 1500, parchment. NIJMEGEN: RADBOUD UNIVERSITY LIBRARY, MS 85, FOL. 1R.*

The manuscript is written on paper; the image was painted on parchment. Parchment was associated with skin (parchment = animal skin), and consequently with the skin of Christ. A full-size image of a nail that was used to crucify Christ was drawn on a page alongside a prayer to the Nail (Fig. 8.5).⁵⁶ The illuminator has painted the Nail as if it had slit the page causing two horizontal cuts, disappearing through one of them and coming out through the other. The nail piercing the page brings the association of the parchment with the skin of Christ poignantly to the fore. In the preface to Christiaan van Adrichem's description of Jerusalem, the Crucifixion is likewise compared with a book 'written with the quill of the speare, of the nails of the thornes, and

⁵⁶ Rotterdam, gemeentebibliotheek, Ms 96 E 12, fol. 28v. See Rudy 2011, pp. 104–06, Pl. I. The caption reads: 'Dit is figuer nae die naghel ons heeren'.



FIGURE 8.5 *Opening page of a prayer to the Nail with a life-size miniature of the Nail piercing the page, Brabant, ca. 1520 (certainly after 1513), page: paper, nail: parchment.*
ROTTERDAM LIBRARY, MS 96 E 12, FOL. 28v.

of the whippes, in the most pure parchment of the Immaculate lambe, and with the purple bloude of the same [...].⁵⁷

A single-sheet image in the Metropolitan Museum of Art clearly shows the association of parchment with skin (Fig. 8.6). An angel pulls up a piece of cloth revealing the side wound of Christ (John 19:34) in a visual format harking back to images of the *sudarium* with the imprint of Christ's face. The Passion relic of the *Vera Icon* was kept in St Peter's in Rome from the twelfth century onwards and shown to pilgrims on a regular basis. In parallel to the *sudarium* the side wound is depicted as a Passion relic. The block print of the side wound is more than an image; it is a vision. The three-dimensionally depicted heart floats in

57 Van Adrichem 1595, preface.



FIGURE 8.6 *Hand-coloured single sheet print of Christ's side wound with xylographic text 'O du süßer ihesu crist wie ser dir dem hercz durch stochen ist' with later textual additions, Nuremberg, block 70 × 59 mm, sheet 84 × 67 mm, ca. 1480-1490, parchment. NEW YORK, METROPOLITAN MUSEUM OF ART, BEQUEST OF JAMES C. MCGUIRE 1931, ACC. 31.54.142. © 2013. IMAGE COPYRIGHT THE METROPOLITAN MUSEUM OF ART / ART RESOURCE / SCALA, FLORENCE.*

front of the cloth instead of being imprinted upon it. The angel does not (just) show a piece of cloth he unveils the wound to the devotee, thereby increasing a sense of physical presence. Most interesting is the slit in the page. A diagonal cut through the parchment manifests the side wound that was made with the spear before taking Christ down from the cross.⁵⁸ The parchment substituting Christ's skin is literally wounded. From the unveiling of the heart to the slit representing the side wound, this print provides several levels of revelation for

58 On the side wound, see: Smith 2012, p. 61; Lewis 1996, pp. 204–29.

the devotee to experience and pass through in his desire for union with Christ. To further enhance the effect of the folio as wounded skin, red paint indicates the blood dripping from the wound into the chalice below.⁵⁹

Guide, Devotional Tool and Relic

Pilgrimage accounts were suitable reading material for devotees who had not been to Jerusalem themselves, because it allowed them to learn about the Gospels and led to a greater understanding of Christian mysteries of salvation. Christiaan van Adrichem added a subtitle to *A brieft description of Hierusalem* saying that the book is 'Verie profitable for Christians to read, for the understanding of the Sacred Scriptures'.⁶⁰ The description of sites in Jerusalem – and Rome for that matter – took the reader back in time to the events that are described in the Bible. The exercise of mental pilgrimage takes the pilgrimage account one step further and turns it into a devotional exercise on the Passion.

The two versions of a mental pilgrimage in Radboud University Library are several steps removed from the pilgrims' guides that describe a physical journey to topographical sites in the Holy Land. First, the sites are arranged chronologically as Christ and the Virgin would have visited them. Secondly, the texts evoke biblical passages and emotions, not so much the contemporary city of Jerusalem. Because mental pilgrimage did not deal with contemporary Jerusalem, but with events from biblical times, Rome and Jerusalem, which both had different things to offer the mental pilgrim, could be integrated into one exercise. To become suitable for Passion devotion the exercises of mental pilgrimage merged with different popular devotions in an interesting way. Because the events are arranged chronologically, other devotions and meditations such as meditations on the Life and Passion of Christ, the Stations of the Cross, the Seven Sorrows of the Virgin and the rosary could easily be incorporated into the fabric of the devotional exercise.

Images of the wounds make different parts of the Passion physically present using parchment as a substitute for skin; measurements make it possible for the devotees to use their own body to add corporeity to the devotional exercise. Some of the mental pilgrimages with measurements were converted to

59 Besides the association of parchment with skin (or even flesh) text was associated with textile, as I have argued before. Van Asperen 2007, pp. 94–96. From these associations grew an interesting interplay of the innately related phrases parchment-text and flesh-cloth.

60 Van Adrichem 1595.

replicate Christ's journey physically.⁶¹ This does not mean that readers of mental pilgrimage always turned the exercise into a physical replication, even if the texts mentions the exact number of footsteps or ells. The reader of *The Indulgence of the Holy Sites of Jerusalem* from Maaseik is advised to retreat to a secluded place to perform the exercise.⁶² Knowledge of the footsteps and ells between stations makes it possible to replicate Christ's journey physically and mentally, but the measurements are more vital to the text: they turn the book into a relic of the Passion. The metaphor of text as a relic was reinforced by the metaphor of the Crucifixion as a book written in Christ's blood using the Arma Christi (the Nails, the Spear, etc.) as styles. The written pilgrimage texts had an intrinsic value as relics that fitted books of Passion devotion and could provide the same rewards as other (metric) relics.

The mental pilgrimage provides the devotee with a guide through Jerusalem and a matching relic of the Passion, because the mental exercises offer a 'measurable' connection with the Passion of Christ. Using recognizable units of space and time, the biblical events become attached to the reader's domain. Geographical boundaries dissolve; earthly and biblical times fuse. Because of their multilayered connection with the Passion, the texts could be used in a variety of ways: to duplicate Christ's journey physically by copying the exact distances, to meditate on the Passion and move in the mind only and/or to safeguard the book owner as would any of the Passion relics that pilgrims so loved to carry with them.

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61 Rudy 2011, pp. 209–18. The Dominican Heinrich Suso whose writings were popular with the Modern-Day Devout (see n. 9) coupled the meditations of his *Hundert Betrachtungen* with a circuit through the monastery. See: Van Aelst 2000, pp. 89–91.

62 Ms 205, fol. 240r: 'Als gij den berch van caluarien visentieren wilt soe sult gij gaen op v kyen [sic] sitten in een heymelicke stat [...]'. Ms 233, fol. 11r: '[...] altijd machmense volcomelick verdienen alsoe verde [sic: far from the Dutch word 'verre'] als sij hoer harten sacken totten heijlighen plaetsen ende den pr nr ende aue maria sijn lesende als daer staet gheteijkent'.

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